



51-1

REPORT ON RELIGIOUS NURTURE.

To the Board of Trustees of Near East Relief;

Under the present plan of organization, the Committee on Religious Nurture is distinct from the Committees on Relationships with American Sunday Schools and from the Committee on Relationships with Eastern Churches, although its work is closely connected with these other committees and correlated with them. The members of the Committee on Sunday School Relationships are ex officio members of the Committee on Religious Nurture.

The larger committee existing before the present committee met in connection with the Bronxville Conference of Religious Leaders in 1924. The action of this committee at that time is fully set forth in the printed leaflet bound herewith entitled "Bronxville Conference Religious Leaders".

The Chairman and the Secretary of this Committee, as well as its other members, have been in vital touch with the development of the Program of Religious Nurture and have given it their advice and aid.

Conferences in reference to this problem were held in connection with the meetings of the World Sunday School Association at Glasgow following earlier conferences here in America.

Dr. Emhardt, of the National Episcopal Council, and Dr. Vance of the Southern Presbyterian Church, representing the program of Religious Nurture, visited all the areas in which Near East Relief has been working and assisted in interpreting both to the Near East Relief staff and to the representatives of the indigenous churches the policy and the program of Near East Relief. Others likewise have had their share in this interpretation, including Bishop Cannon, Mr. Cavert, Mr. George Stewart, Drs. Burnham and Cory of the Disciples Church the Chairman of this Committee and many others. All seem to agree that the religious instruction received by the children in the orphanages is creditable and effective considering the circumstances under which this instruction is now given. They also all agree that there is still very much to be done and the time is now ripe for the creation of a constructive program that shall give to the children the finer elements of their own native church life and that of Western Church life in such manner as to make them more loyal to their own church and at the same time to give to them the ethical and social ideals that have been developed more largely in the Occidental churches.

We have given careful attention to Mr. Voris' report and to its recommendations and on the whole we approve his findings,

the most important of which are included in our recommendations below.

As a committee, we are deeply interested in the whole problem of the nurture of the children, including worship and the opportunities afforded the children for ethical expression, as well as in their training. The first advance step has been to set plans moving to discover and arrange lesson material of a simple order that can be used either in Sabbath schools or in week day religious instruction. The account of this development, together with the list of agencies interested in its progress, is given herewith.

We approve the policy as laid down by Near East Relief and as expressed in the report of the committee on Overseas Church Relations, of working with indigenous churches.

We believe the children, in order to become leaders, must go out into a church that is ready to receive them and into which they are eager to go.

We heartily approve the policy of working with other agencies interested in the Near East, not only in the creation of lesson material, but also in other plans of religious nurture.

We offer the following recommendations:

#1: We recommend that religious education be given a place in the Near East Relief program which the need and the opportunity justifies. We urge that adequate provision be made for this program and that there be a recognition that the problem is too difficult to be dealt with lightly or merely as local Near East Relief officials may determine.

#2: We recommend the authorization of a definite policy of expansion of the program of Religious Education as far as is necessary to meet the needs and in so far as it is acceptable to the leadership of the native churches and of the orphanages involved.

#3: We recommend that Near East Relief, working with the other agencies interested in religious education in the Near East, plan a program of religious nurture which will have the approval of the leaders of the indigenous churches in the Near East.

#4: We recommend the authorization of a sufficient budget to cover religious educational leadership for the orphanages in Greece and in Syria and such immediate educational materials as are necessary including:

Sunday School Lessons
Books of Prayer
Books of Hymns.

#5: We would recommend the authorization of a reasonably adequate religious educational leadership, securing such leadership

where possible from the Americans residing now in the Near East or from the teaching force of Near East Relief. We believe, however, that there should be a General Director of Religious Education in Syria and in Palestine and another in Greece. These should be Americans, Associated with them there might reasonably be in Syria an assistant or an associate director who should be an Armenian, and in Greece as assistant director who should have charge of Armenian work and an assistant native Greek for the Greek work. We further recommend wherever it is feasible designating in each orphanage center some one person to be responsible for religious education.

#6: We recommend the appointment of representative Advisory Committees on Religious Education in the Syrian area and in the Greek area to work under the direction of the Near East Director, but to be related for program to the New York Office. These committees would be a part of the General Overseas Advisory Committee on Religious Education and Church Relationships. These committees, which should represent the native Orthodox, Evangelical and Catholic churches, as well as American agencies with workers in the Near East, should take the leadership in the building of a program of religious education that will have the approval and cooperation of the native churches as well as of the Near East authorities.

We append herewith a Minute of the Meeting of the representatives of Near East Christian Agencies for the purpose of determining upon a plan for the creation of religious educational material to be used primarily in Near East Relief orphanages. We also append the names of the agencies cooperating in such an endeavor. It should be understood that these agencies are interested similarly in the development of lesson material for their own work.

We recommend wherever possible that the World's Sunday School Association have a recognized place in the religious education organization of Near East Relief. May your committee say finally that it believes that a program of religious education for these children is desired by the churches and Sunday Schools of America which support Near East Relief and that the best possible educational propaganda, centering as it must in the saving of life, culminates in the enrichment of life and its training for service. We believe that the most adequate approach to the Near East problem is a religious educational approach. It opens up a new field not yet discovered or developed by the ancient churches in the Near East. It is America's major potential contribution to them. The way is open now for this contribution. We believe that it should be given.

(Signed) HENRY N MEYER.

- Notes: 1. Mr. Voris's unabridged report on Religious Education is available to those desiring it (in Mimeographed form).
2. The record of the first steps taken to prepare special lesson material is bound in this document with Report #37.
3. See Section VIII, paragraph 3, of Mr. Archer's report for further statements regarding the overseas program of instruction.